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ABSTRACT

This document outlines student progress within each of California's Adult Education programs for the 1997-1998 academic year. During this time period, California's Adult Education programs served 1,435,341 learners. Among those enrolled, 161,364 students were served by Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, and an additional 1,220,594 students were served by English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The remaining 53,383 learners were served by state-funded Adult High School programs. Learners enrolled in California's Adult Education programs received an average of 81.4 hours of instruction over the academic year. In ABE programs, 20.9% of learners who entered the literacy program at the beginning level scored at the next highest level in the post-test. In other skill areas of ABE programs, 35.2% of learners who entered at the beginning level scored at the next highest level in the post-test. For those who entered at the intermediate level, 39.2% of learners scored at the next highest level in the post-test. Of the individuals enrolled in ESL programs, 38.6% of those entering at the beginning level, and 39.5% entering at the intermediate level, scored at the next level on the post-test. All the learners enrolled in Adult High School Programs entered at the advanced level, and 31.8% scored at the next highest level on the post-test. (TGO)

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Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System

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California Update: Student Progress in State and Federally Funded Adult Education Programs During the 1997-98 Instructional Year

During the 1997-98 instructional year, California's Adult Education programs served 1,435,341 learners. Among those enrolled, 161,364 students were served by Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs and 1,220,594 were served by English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. The remaining 53,383 learners were served by state-funded Adult High School programs. Learners enrolled in California's Adult Education programs received an average of 81.4 hours of instruction over the instructional period. This summary outlines student progress within each of these programs for the 1997-98 instructional period. See Table 1 for a summary of learner advancement.

The CASAS National Descriptor Levels are used as a framework for interpreting pre- and post-test data. These descriptors have been incorporated into the National Reporting System Skill Level Descriptors.

ESL Programs

Reading pre- and post-test data were used to illustrate the impact of adult education on reading skill development. Student skill level at program entry was determined using a CASAS pretest. Students remaining in their program for 80 to 120 hours were administered a post-test to determine learning gains and level advancement.

Among ESL learners, 13.7% entered their program at the *Beginning Literacy* level. Learners functioning at this level score below 181 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

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Listening/Speaking

- Functions minimally, if at all, in English.
- Communicates through gestures and a few isolated words

Reading/Writing

- May not be literate in any language
- Employment options restricted to routine entry level positions requiring no oral or written skills

A total of 30,625 learners who entered their program with extremely limited listening, speaking, reading and writing skills could now ask and respond to basic learned phrases, recognize and write letters and numbers, write their own name and address, and handle routine entry-level jobs where tasks are easily demonstrated.

Among ESL learners, 50.6% entered their program at the *Beginning* level. Learners functioning at this level score between 181 and 200 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

Listening/Speaking

- Can function in a limited way or with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs
- Can communicate using basic learned phrases and sentences

Reading/Writing

- Can read and write letters and numbers
- Can write basic personal information on simplified forms

Pre- and post-test data indicated that 38.6% entering at the *Beginning* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. A total of 238,598 learners who entered their program with minimal listening, speaking, reading and writing skills could now understand simple learned phrases easily, read and interpret simple material on familiar topics, interpret simple directions, signs and menus, and handle entry-level jobs requiring simple oral and written communication.

Nearly 27.4% of ESL program learners entered their program at the *Intermediate* level. Learners functioning at this level score between 201 and 220 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

Listening/Speaking

- Can satisfy basic survival needs and social demands
- Can understand simple learned phrases easily
- Learners at the top end of this scale range can follow oral directions in familiar settings

Reading/Writing

- Can read and interpret simple material on familiar topics
- Can write short, simple messages and notes on familiar topics
- Learners at the top end of this score range can fill out basic medical information and job applications

Pre- and post-test data indicated that 39.5% entering at the *Intermediate Literacy* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. A total of 132,267 learners who entered their program with basic literacy skills were now able to perform

routine listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks, interpret charts, graphs, labels, and payroll stubs, complete medical forms and job applications, and handle jobs and job/training situations that require following oral and written instructions.

Slightly over 8% of ESL learners entered their program at the *Advanced* level. Learners functioning at this level score between 221 and 230 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

Listening/Speaking

- Can communicate using the telephone on familiar topics
- Can participate in conversation on a variety of topics

Reading/Writing

- Can read and interpret simplified and non-simplified material on familiar topics
- Can write short personal notes and letters and make simple log entries
- Learners at the upper end of this score range are able to begin GED preparation

Pre- and post-test data indicated that 6.6% entering at the *Advanced Literacy* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. A total of 6,617 learners who entered their program with functional listening, speaking, reading and writing skills could now function independently in social and work situations, read and interpret non-simplified materials on everyday subjects, write and accident or incident report, and perform reading and writing tasks such as reports, logs and forms.

ABE Programs

Reading pre- and post-test data were used to illustrate the impact of adult education on reading skill development. Student skill level at program entry was determined using a CASAS pretest. Students remaining in their program for 80 to 120 hours were administered a post-test to determine learning gains and level advancement.

Among ABE learners, 29.7 percent entered their program at the *Beginning Literacy* level. Learners functioning at this level score below 201 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Very limited ability to read or write
- Can provide very basic personal information such as address and phone number in written form
- Those at the upper end of the scale range can read and write letters, numbers, and simple words related to immediate needs

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 20.9% of learners entering at the *Beginning Literacy* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. In essence, 10,028 learners who entered their program with very limited reading and writing skills could now fill out simple forms, write a simple phone message, calculate simple mathematical operations, and handle entry level jobs involving some simple written communication.

Thirty-three percent of ABE learners entered their program at the *Beginning level.* Learners functioning at this level score between 201 and 210 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Can complete simple forms requiring personal information
- Can calculate a single mathematical operation when numbers are provided
- Can read and interpret simple signs, maps, and menus

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 35.2% of learners entering at the *Beginning* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. A total of 18,929 learners who entered their program with limited reading, writing, and math skills could now perform basic reading, writing, and computational tasks, interpret charts, graphs, labels and payroll stubs, and handle jobs and/or job training that involve following basic oral or written instructions.

Nearly 37% of ABE program learners entered their program at the *Intermediate* level. Learners functioning at this level score between 211 and 220 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Can perform basic reading, writing, and computational tasks
- Can interpret simple charts and graphs
- Can complete simple order forms and do calculations

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 39.2% of learners entering at the *Intermediate* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. A total of 23,366 learners who entered their program with basic literacy skills were now able to perform routine reading, writing, and computational tasks, fill out medical forms and job applications, reconcile bank statements, and follow multi-step diagrams and written instructions.

Adult High School Programs

All adult high school learners entered their program at the *Advanced* level. Learners functioning at this level score between 221 and 230 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Can perform most routine reading, writing, and computational tasks related to their life roles
- Can interpret charts, graphs, and simple employee handbooks
- Can follow multi-step diagrams and written instructions
- Can maintain a family budget

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 31.8% of learners entering at the *Advanced* level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. In other words, 16,975 learners who entered their program with functional literacy skills were now able to read and interpret legal forms and manuals, use math for business calculations like discounts and sale prices, integrate information from multiple texts, and evaluate and organize information.

Table 1 – Proportion of Learners Indicating Progress to the Next Instructional Level Using Instructor Reports and Reading Post-test Scores

	Reading Post-test Score Indicator of Advancement	
Program Level at Entry	N	%
ESL		
Beginning Literacy	30,625	18.3
Beginning	238,598	38.6
Intermediate	132,267	39.5
Advanced	6,617	6.6
ABE		
Beginning Literacy	10,028	20.9
Beginning	18,929	35.2
Intermediate	23,366	39.2
Adult High School		
Advanced	16,975	31.8